

California's Mojave Max Makes Spring Debut February 13, 2010 2:30 PM

California's own desert tortoise Mojave Max emerged from brumation on February 13, at 2:30 PM. Max had been slumbering through the winter in her burrow (tortoise den) at The Living Desert Zoo and Botanical Garden in Palm Desert California. Last year, she emerged on February 24, and went into brumation in November. Each fall, when the weather turns cold, desert tortoises brumate, a reptilian form of hibernation. Warmer weather and a spectacular wildflower season may have lured her from her burrow.

The Mojave Max Emergence Contest began in Nevada as a way for the public to learn about desert tortoises and what can be done to help this threatened species. In 2005, the Desert Managers Group began a California version of the Mojave Max Emergence Contest. The object of the contest is to guess when Mojave Max will emerge from her burrow for the first time after a long winter sleep (brumation). Although the California and Nevada contests are similar, each state has its own tortoise. Because California's Mojave Max lives at a lower elevation where winters are milder, she generally will emerge first.

California students who entered the contest improved their guesses by studying Mojave Desert weather, temperatures, and conditions to estimate when Mojave Max would emerge from her burrow in 2010. Students entered their guesses on line at www.deserttortoise.gov or www.livingdesert.org.

Entries are being tabulated and the official winner(s) are in the process of being notified. Eligibility for awards was offered to Southern California K-12 students in Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura counties.

Next fall around November, the Mojave Max Emergence contest will begin again.

For more desert tortoise media information including news stories, press releases, newsletters, and public service announcements go to: www.deserttortoise.gov/information/news.html
For Desert Managers Group information, go to: <http://www.dmg.gov>
For Living Desert information go to: www.livingdesert.org/